

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**
**The Statewide Voluntary Preschool
Program for Four-Year-Old Children**

***TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
GUIDANCE MANUAL
2008 – 2009***

Availability of Funds

Grant application awards are contingent on the 2008 legislative appropriation. Additional application requirements may be added if legislatively mandated. Applicants who file a Letter of Intent by April 15, 2008 will be notified of any changes to the application.

<p>LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: April 15, 2008 APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 9, 2008</p>
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If you have questions or grievances related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, telephone number 515/281-5295, or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 111 N. Canal Street, Suite 1053, Chicago, IL 60606-7204.

Technical Assistance Guidance Manual for Writing the Application for The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children

**STATEWIDE VOLUNTARY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FOR
FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN****TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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Introduction

Potential Impact of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children

Research offers unarguable evidence that a high-quality, research-based preschool program, especially for low-income children, has long-range educational and economic benefits. The benefits of investing in programs that meet quality standards for children and society are well documented through rigorous research studies. Children who have attended a high-quality preschool exhibit stronger language, math, thinking, and social skills. They are better prepared to cooperate in kindergarten and elementary school, and their relationships with peers are more positive (Committee for Economic Development, 2006. *The economic promise of investing in high-quality preschool*. Washington: D.C.).

The impact of high-quality preschool programming in the state of Iowa may be evidenced not only in improved student achievement, but also in the long-term economic benefits of a more productive and highly skilled workforce. Some of the economic advantages found in national studies are demonstrated through decreased incarceration, eliminated or reduced special education services, and additional tax dollars from a more employable workforce. High-quality preschools create stronger communities. It is the Department's belief that providing a diverse array of environments interwoven with family and community support, will lead to ultimate learning opportunities for young children of Iowa.

This document is to assist school districts in writing the Application for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children. Criteria for Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships and Community Assets and Needs for Providing Quality Preschool Programming are italicized to provide clarity for the reader.

Definitions

Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts Associated with the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children

The following key concepts and terms associated with the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children are referenced throughout this document. They are defined below to provide clarification and establish a common understanding.

“Applicant” means a school district applying to become an approved local program. Only public school districts in Iowa may apply for state funds under this chapter.

“Approved local program” means a school district's voluntary preschool program for eligible children approved by the department of education to provide high-quality preschool instruction.

“Assessment” means a systematic ongoing procedure for obtaining information from observations, interviews, portfolios and tests that can be used to make judgments about the strengths and needs of individual children and plan appropriate instruction.

“Collaboration” means the process by which people who care about a community or an issue commit to examining and improving the ways that people and groups affected are inter-related.

“Community Empowerment Areas” means partnerships in local communities with broad representation to lead collaborative efforts involving education, health, and human service programs and services on behalf of the children families and other citizens residing in the geographic area.

“Comprehensive services” means the provision of quality developmentally appropriate early learning experiences consistent with age-relevant abilities or milestones, extended day childcare services, developmental screenings, including health, hearing, and vision screening, transportation, and family education and support services.

“Curriculum” means research-based or evidence-based written framework that is comprehensive, addresses the needs of the whole child, and provides a guide for decision-making about content, instructional methods, and assessment.

“Department” means the department of education.

“Developmentally appropriate” describes practices that are based upon knowledge of how children develop and learn, and are responsive to the individual's learning strengths, interests, and needs.

“Early childhood special education” or *“ECSE”* means special education and related services for those individuals below the age of six (6) as described in 281—Iowa Administrative Code chapter 41.

“Eligible children” means a child who is a resident of Iowa and is four (4) years of age on or before September 15 of the school year. If space and funding are available, a school district approved to participate in the preschool program may enroll a younger or older child in the preschool program; however, the child shall not be counted for state funding purposes.

“Family education and support” means any developmentally appropriate activity or information, provided either formally or informally to parents, that supports the success of children and their families to reach desired results.

“Include” means that the items named are not all of the possible items that are covered, whether like or unlike the ones named.

“Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA” refers to 20 U.S.C §1401 et seq., formerly the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA). The federal regulations implementing IDEA are found at 34 CFR Parts 300, 303.

“Para-educator” is a certified educational assistant as defined in Iowa Code section 272.1(6) and licensed under the rules in 282—Iowa Administrative Code chapter 22.

“Poverty” is measured by the percentage of the elementary students in the applicant district that qualify for free or reduced school hot lunch.

“Prekindergarten program” means an education program offered by a school district or by an accredited nonpublic school as defined in 281—Iowa Administrative Code rule 12.5(1).

“Preschool budget enrollment” means the figure that is equal to 60 percent of the actual enrollment of eligible students in the preschool programming provided by a school district approved to participate in the preschool program by the date provided in Iowa Code section 257.6.

“Preschool program” means the statewide preschool program for four-year-old children created in accordance with Iowa Code section 256C.

“Program standards” means the expectations for the characteristics or quality of early childhood centers and schools approved by the department. Approved program standards include National Association for the Education of Young Children Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards or other approved program standards as determined by the department.

“Size of School District” means the number of students enrolled in the district based on the certified enrollment count in October. The size is determined by the following enrollments:

- *Small* - districts with enrollment of 399 or less
- *Medium* - districts with enrollment of 400-2,499
- *Large* - districts with enrollment of 2,500 or more

“Staff” means those individuals implementing preschool program activities under the direct supervision of a teacher. Staff includes para-educators, teacher aides and teacher associates. All staff members shall meet the program standards as defined above.

“Teacher” means an individual who holds a valid practitioner's license issued by the Board of Educational Examiners under chapter 272 and holds an endorsement from the Board of Educational Examiners that includes prekindergarten or kindergarten. There is no requirement that the teacher be an employee of the applicant district; the teacher may be employed by a private provider or other public agency with whom the applicant district has entered into a 28E agreement or contract.

Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships *Specifically Aligned to the Application*

This information is aligned specifically with “Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships” (“Section D”) in the Application for The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

Collaboration: Community Partners and Commitment Form

The following information will assist Applicants in the identification of required partners.

Who is required to be a partner?

No communities are the same; consequently, school districts will have to ascertain which of the partners listed in 281—Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) chapters 16 are relevant to the specific community. Every community has representation from at least the following partners:

- Parents/families;
- Area Education Agency (AEA);
- Community Empowerment Board(s);
- Business representatives;
- Head Start;
- Human Services; and
- Public Health.

Partners required to be included if they are applicable are identified below. Additional information on potential partners follows the list. Community Partners include:

- Families;
- School Districts;
 - (If grant proposal includes more than one district applicant, all districts must be included in the collaborative process)
- Accredited nonpublic schools;
- Faith-based representatives;
- Community Empowerment Board(s);
- Business representatives;
- Head Start;
- Shared Visions and other programs under the auspices of the Child Development Coordinating Council;
- Center-based childcare centers;
- Home-based childcare;
- Human Services (Childcare Resource and Referral);
- Public Health; and
- Economic Development programs.

Descriptions of Specified Community Partners

The following information provides a brief description of the early childhood partners required (as applicable) to be part of the collaboration efforts to promote the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

Community Empowerment (Available in every area and a required partner). Community Empowerment Areas are partnerships formed by local communities with broad representation in order to lead collaborative efforts involving education, health and human service programs and other services on behalf of the children (ages prenatal to five), families and other citizens residing in a specific geographic area. Community Empowerment Boards are charged with using funds allocated through School Ready (state) and Early Childhood (federal) grants to contract with family support providers to enhance the quality of life for families and children ages prenatal through five; scholarships for preschool access/support or transportation for children ages three to five and other early care, health and education services identified as a need or priority in the Community Empowerment Area's Community Plan. To learn more about Community Empowerment visit the Website at <http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/>. For specific Community Empowerment Area information visit the map under "Local Areas" and click on the specific geographic location.

Head Start (Available in every area and a required partner). Head Start is a federally funded child development program implemented in 1965 to provide developmentally appropriate preschool to young children ages three to five from families at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition, ten percent of children have special needs. Head Start follows the Head Start Program Performance Standards that are indicative of high-quality programming. Most teachers have a two- or four-year degree and most associates possess at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. All Head Start classrooms are licensed by the Department of Human Services unless operated by a school district. Even though there may not be a Head Start classroom in the school district, children from the school district may be attending Head Start programs in neighboring areas. School districts would include that Head Start agency in collaborative conversations. To find out about programs in a specific area, visit the Iowa Head Start Association Website at <http://iowaheadstart.org/> and click on "Iowa Head Start" then "Programs and Map."

Shared Visions. Shared Visions is a state-funded child development program established in 1987 for children ages three to five from families with at-risk factors or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. All Shared Visions programs are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an indicator of high-quality programming. The majority of teachers in Shared Visions programs have a teaching license through the Board of Educational Examiners. Programs not administered by a public school must be a licensed childcare center through the Department of Human Services. To find out if there is a Shared Visions program in a specific area, please visit the DE Website at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/645/1016/>.

Faith-based Representatives. The partner may be a representative of the religious community or a representative of a faith-based preschool. School districts may partner with faith-based religious preschools for the provision of preschool programming as long as the Preschool Foundation Aid funding supports instruction that is "secular, neutral, and non-ideological." While religious instruction may be provided, the child's participation in that instruction must be entirely voluntary and not at all supported by public funds. An arrangement with a faith-based entity or organization to provide statewide voluntary preschool programming shall not violate the following:

- First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause (i.e., a child is not compelled to participate in any religious instruction or activity);
- First Amendment's Establishment Clause (i.e., public funds are not used to support religious instruction).

Childcare Centers. Childcare centers must be a licensed childcare center through the Department of Human Services if more than six children are served. Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R) can provide information about childcare centers. Contact information is at

http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/childcare.html. There is also a link to view a list of providers by county on this page. Centers are encouraged to participate in the voluntary Quality Rating System (QRS) as evidence of continued effort toward quality programming. To find out more about the QRS and to view a list of participating providers and their rating go to <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/>.

School districts are not required to be licensed through the Department of Human Services but may choose to do so in addition to following all guidelines from the Iowa Department of Education.

Home-Based Childcare. Home-based childcare providers are not required to be registered with the Department of Human Services unless they serve more than five children. Registered homes are identified as Child Development Homes. Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R) can provide information about Child Development Homes. Contact information is at

http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/childcare.html. There is also a link to view a list of providers by county on this page. Child Development Homes are encouraged to participate in the voluntary Quality Rating System (QRS) as evidence of continued effort toward quality programming. To find out more about the QRS and to view a list of participating providers and their rating go to <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/>.

Childcare Resource & Referral – See Childcare Centers.

Human Services (Available in every area and a required partner). The Department of Human Services oversees childcare subsidies, childcare licensure and home provider registration, the QRS and maintains data from a variety of sources. The following is the Website to find the local office:

http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/children_family/getting_help/map_offices.html.

Public Health (Available in every area and a required partner). The Department of Public Health oversees not only health concerns in the state but offers programs for immunization, family support, health education and more. A representative of public health can be located through the following Website:

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/common/pdf/local_public_health_services/region_map.pdf.

Economic Development Programs. Economic development programs include projects funded through the Iowa Department of Economic Development and other local efforts to positively impact the economic development of the community. Projects funded through Vision Iowa can be located through the following website:

<http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/>.

Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships Narrative

Effective preschool programming cannot be achieved in isolation. It is important for districts to consider community partners that contribute to children's later success in school. In this section the applicant will describe the collaborative process used in developing the Application and the general education preschool programming. The applicant will also describe how families were involved in the development of the Application, as well as how they will be involved in ongoing preschool programming.

Criteria for Scoring:

1. *What evidence is provided documenting methods of communication with the applicable community partners?*

Documents may include meeting notices, copies of emails, notices of public hearing, agenda and minutes of meetings, newspaper advertisements or articles, etc.

Methods of communication may include:

- Reference to the specific items used to document stakeholder involvement.
- Dates and method of personal contact (e.g., phone, email, meeting).

2. *What evidence is provided indicating the applicant has created partnerships among early care, health and education providers and community partners to support the implementation of general education preschool programming for four-year-olds including implementing supports to meet the diverse needs of children and their families?*

Letters of support or dissent from agencies/organizations involved in planning and implementation of the preschool program document the level of support from the applicable partners. Letters of support or dissent should be unique to each person/organization and clearly express support or dissent for the agreed-upon preschool program plan. Partners who submit letters should specifically describe their intended role in making the project successful. Letters of support and dissent will not be accepted by the Department but should be included in the Appendix of the Application

3. *What evidence is provided that the applicant has developed ongoing relationships with community partners to provide quality preschool programming?*

Describe existing relationships and partnerships that demonstrate the district's long-term commitment and collaborative efforts in the community around and for young children. Applications indicating long-term relationships with community partners will be awarded more points.

Partnerships may include existing relationships between the school district and:

- Community Empowerment to offer preschool scholarships;
- Community childcare centers to provide placements for children with disabilities;
- Head Start or Shared Visions to expand quality programming;
- Businesses in the community to support meeting program standards by, for example, providing funds for equipment and materials;
- Public health or health care providers in the community to support meeting program standards for children's health.

4. *What evidence is provided that the applicant has linked with existing interagency, community-wide strategies to maintain a comprehensive, integrated early care, health and education system?*

Applicants may discuss how the school district has been involved and participated in interagency, county-wide strategies to maintain early care, health and education partnerships and initiatives. The following are identified as community-wide results to improve the well-being of children:

- Healthy Children;
- Children Ready to Succeed in School;
- Safe and Supportive Communities;
- Secure and Nurturing Families; and
- Secure and Nurturing Childcare Environments.

Districts should seek partnerships with agencies addressing community-wide strategies targeting the comprehensive needs of children. Examples of such agencies at the local level include Community Empowerment, Head Start, Childcare Resource and Referral, AEAs, local health agencies, Iowa State University Extension, Faith-Based Organizations, etc.

5. *What evidence is provided that the applicant has utilized various outreach efforts or strategies to engage diverse populations reflective of the community and families of young children?*

Examples of outreach methods may include the following dated artifacts:

- Personal invitation from the school district through:
 - Email, phone calls, personal correspondence and/or contacts;
- Public hearings;
- All written communication translated into applicable languages;
- Interpreters for planning meetings and public hearings;
- Personal invitation from current partners;
- Accommodations made for community partners with disabilities;

- Holding meetings that are convenient for working families; or
- Providing childcare so families can attend meetings.

Additional information the school district may want to include:

- The use of available data to ascertain the diverse nature of the community;
- A description of the diverse populations present within the community;
- How diverse representatives were included in partnership conversations;
- How diverse populations were encouraged to provide input for the design and implementation of the preschool program plan;
- The extent of participation from groups of diversity; and/or
- The plan to promote ongoing participation in collaboration endeavors.

The following is the clause describing the anti-discrimination policy of the Department. School districts should keep this policy in mind when gathering diverse partners for collaboration around the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, gender, disability, religion, age, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by the Iowa Code sections 216.9 and 256.10(2), Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d and 2000e), the Equal Pay Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 206, *et seq.*), Title IX (Educational Amendments, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 – 1688), Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101, *et seq.*).

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6. What evidence is provided that the applicant has involved families in the development of the Application?

School districts can describe how families were encouraged to become involved by including the following dated artifacts:

- Personal invitation from the school district through;
 - Email, phone calls, personal correspondence, personal contacts;
- Public hearings;
- All written communication translated into applicable languages;
- Interpreters for planning meetings and public hearings;
- Personal invitation from current partners;
- Accommodations made for community partners with disabilities ;
- Holding meetings that are convenient for working families;

- Providing childcare so families can attend meetings;
- Letters or newsletters to families whose children already attend the school district; and/or
- Collaboration meeting schedules and information on the school district website for parents.

7. *What evidence is provided that the applicant has made provisions for ongoing involvement of families in the general education preschool programming?*

Parent involvement is required when providing the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children. Applicants and community partners must involve families in the following activities:

- At least one home visit per year by the licensed teacher;
- One family night; and
- At least two family teacher conferences per year.

In addition to the required involvement, a plan for including the family may address the following:

- Families will help develop a process where families provide feedback for the program evaluation;
- Parents on an advisory committee;
- During home visits, teachers learn about family's culture; home/work/community life and interests; incorporating these into the curriculum;
- Families will influence the development of family group activities;
- Frequency and form of communication between families and school;
- Family nights with a focus on literacy and curriculum;
- Classroom activities/events;
- Family volunteers in the classroom/school events;
- Referral to family support services or agencies;
- Orientation to preschool; and/or
- Parent education.

Applicants and community partners may find the following links helpful in enhancing parent involvement.

- Iowa Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) handbook "Reach Out to Parents for Student Success: Tool Kit for Educators" may be helpful to school districts and can be found at: <http://www.iowaparents.org/getting-involved/toolkit>.
- Iowa Public Television "Family Messages" at: <http://www.iptv.org/kids/grownups/resources/FamilyMessages.cfm>
- Head Start Parent Resources at: http://www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/pi_intro.htm.

Community Assets and Needs for Providing Quality Preschool Programming *Specifically Aligned to the Application*

This information is aligned specifically with “Community Assets and Needs for Providing Quality Preschool Programming” (“Section E”) in the Application for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

No two communities are the same; every community is a unique compilation of strengths and challenges. The information the applicant gathers about the community and the district assists the applicant in the development of a preschool plan to meet the distinctive needs of children and families. In this section of the Application, the school district provides a thoughtful, in-depth analysis of the community dynamics and significant characteristics that will set the stage to justify the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

To assist applicants in organizing community and district data, the *Analysis of Preschool Data Form* is required. This form assists the applicant in determining a reasonable estimate of the number of eligible children. By examining data sources such as those found in this form, in addition to kindergarten enrollment data, census data, and/or survey data, the applicant will have gathered and analyzed data to identify unmet needs.

Analysis of Preschool Data Form

The *Analysis of Preschool Data Form* should reflect the preschool programming options within the school district. This information will assist the school district and community partners in identifying the capacity for quality preschool programming. To complete the *Analysis of Preschool Data Form*, applicants need to gather information from the following types of programs:

- Programs that provide preschool for general education preschoolers in the district and in the community include Licensed Childcare Centers, Tuition-Based Preschool/Childcare, Registered Child Development Homes, and Accredited Non-Public or Faith-Based Preschools.
- Programs that provide opportunities for extending the day of at-risk children include Head Start, Even Start, Title I, and Shared Visions Programs.

For each program in district boundaries, the applicant will generate the following information:

- Name and contact for each preschool provider;
- The agency regulating each preschool provider;
 - Department of Human Services (DHS) Licensed Childcare or Preschool
 - DHS Registered Child Development Home
 - Department approved district administered preschool, and pre-kindergarten programs
- The types of standards regulating these preschool programs;
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
 - Head Start Program Performance Standards

- Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS)
 - None
 - Other
- The availability of an appropriately licensed teacher;
- The number of four-year-olds attending each preschool program; and
- The number of eligible children who will be four on or before September 15 of next school year (those children who will be eligible for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.)

Analysis of Preschool Data Form

(Include School District-Operated Programs)

First priority for the allocation of Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds

Name of Program/ Contact Person	Regulated by: (Please indicate one.)			Program Standards (Please indicate one.)					BOEE Licensed Teacher Y or N	Number of Four Year Olds Attending the Program	*Number of Eligible Children (who are f on or before September 15 of school year)
	DHS Licensed	DHS Registered Child Development Home	DE	NAEYC	Head Start	QPPS	Other	None			
Licensed Childcare											
Tuition- Based Preschool/Child Care											
Registered Child Development Homes											
Accredited nonpublic or Faith-based Preschools											

*Count only those children eligible for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program during the grant application year.

Note: Districts are encouraged to review kindergarten enrollment trend data to assist in estimating the number of eligible children.

Analysis of Preschool Data Form

(Include School District-Operated Programs)

Second priority for the allocation of Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds

Name of Program/ Contact Person	Regulated by: (Please indicate one.)			Program Standards (Please indicate one.)					BOEE Licensed Teacher Y or N	Number of Four Year Olds Attending the program	*Number of Eligible Children (who are 4 on or before September 15 of school year)
	DHS Licensed	DHS Registered Child Development Home	DE	NAEYC	Head Start	QPPS	Other	None			
Head Start											
Even Start											
Title I											
Shared Visions Programs											

*Count children eligible for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program during the upcoming academic year.

Note: Districts are encouraged to review kindergarten enrollment trend data to assist in estimating the number of eligible children

Where Can School Districts Obtain Additional Data About Preschool Providers and Additional Child Data in Their Area?

To obtain information on licensed childcare centers and registered Child Development Homes, school districts may contact:

- Department of Human Services
 - For information on licensed childcare centers and registered Child Development Homes contact Childcare Resource & Referral
http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/childcare.html.
- Community Empowerment
 - Community Empowerment Areas are knowledgeable of childcare and preschool programs in the community. They are required to perform a Community Needs Assessment at least every three years. This may be a useful resource in planning programming needs. For additional information see:
<http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/> . For specific Community Empowerment Area information visit the map under “Local Areas” and click on the specific geographic location to find the contact information for the local empowerment coordinator.
- Head Start/Early Head Start grantees are required to perform a community needs assessment every three years in order to successfully provide comprehensive services to their families. Contact the local Head Start Director for information:
<http://www.iowaheadstart.org/iowa/program.html>
-
- Iowa Department of Public Health provides additional resources for demographic information. Contact the local public health office:
http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/common/pdf/local_public_health_services/region_map.pdf.
- Iowa Department of Human Services
 - For demographic information such as the number of young children in poverty contact the local Department of Human Services office:
http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/children_family/getting_help/map_offices.html.
 - For information on licensed childcare centers and registered child development homes contact Childcare Resource & Referral:
http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/childcare.html.

Community Assets and Needs for Providing Quality Preschool Programming Narrative

With the understanding that program standards and an appropriately licensed teacher are required for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children, the information contained in *Analysis of Preschool Data Form* guides the school district and collaborative partners in determining preschool model options. Community provider information, coupled with school district programming details, offer a view of not only what programs currently exist, but the quality of those programs as well. The school district analyzes data provided to determine potential preschool partnerships. The applicant will know which programs meet quality preschool program standards and those with licensed teachers. The school district has the responsibility to contact preschool providers within the district boundaries and gather information.

Using information collected on the *Analysis of Preschool Data Form* the applicant will provide a description of preschool programming including partnering agencies providing preschool, sites where services are provided, and the program plan being used to implement the preschool program.

The school district builds a connection between the analysis of preschool providers and the number of preschool children to reveal the gaps that may be present in the areas of implementation and provision of quality four-year-old preschool. As the needs become evident, barriers to program implementation are also identified. School districts and partners develop a plan to overcome anticipated barriers. With the needs clearly identified, school districts develop justification and a comprehensive plan for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

Criteria for Scoring:**8. What evidence is provided that the applicant will give enrollment priority to serve four-year-old children in poverty?**

The narrative section should describe how the preschool program will address young children in poverty. School districts could address the free and reduced school meal program percentages for elementary school or the population in general. For demographic information such as the number of young children in poverty contact the local Department of Human Services office:

http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/children_family/getting_help/map_offices.

9. What evidence is provided that the applicant has analyzed demographics, significant characteristics and/or changes in the community?**Understanding and identifying local demographics**

Examples of community demographic information include, but are not limited to:

- Age and gender distribution;
- Ethnicity unique to the community;
- Languages spoken in the community;
- Family status (single-parent, teen births etc.);
- Family education;
- Working families;
- Socioeconomic diversity of the community;
- The impact of age, ethnicity, gender, family status on socioeconomics;
- Workforce distribution and options;

- The number of families on Family Investment Program (FIP) especially for ages 0-5 (contact the local Department of Human Services office); and/or
- Changes in community demographics may include, but are not limited to:
 - Influx of immigrants and the creation of potential language barriers for families and children;
 - Relocation or closing of business/workplace sites;
 - Preschools closing in the community creating a shortage of educational opportunities for four-year-old children; and/or
 - An increasing population of children under five or young families.

Statistical information which may be useful in describing and analyzing local demographics may be obtained:

- School districts may find pertinent trend data from the Iowa Department of Public Health vital statistics which provides the number of live births by county from 1993 to 2005 at the following Website:
http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/health_statistics/2005/html/table_45.html.

Significant Characteristics of the Community

What is it about the community that is significant and unique? Examples to discuss could include, but are not limited to:

- Is the community urban or rural?
- Has the community suffered a loss of preschool capacity?
- Is it a military community?
- Is there cultural or religious diversity in the community?

10. What evidence is provided that the applicant has analyzed and addressed the current availability of general education preschool programming to serve four-year-old children within the school district boundaries?

School districts are encouraged to use the information from the *Analysis of Preschool Data Form* to describe current preschool programming in the community. This will assist the applicant in planning for the provision of, or expansion of, preschool programming meeting quality program requirements.

11. What evidence is provided that the applicant has addressed nonexistent general education preschool opportunities within the school district boundaries to serve four-year-old children?

The district describes all current preschool programming in the community, if any, that meets the quality program requirements, as well as those that do not meet the quality program requirements.

12. What evidence is provided that the applicant has addressed the unmet needs for providing quality general education preschool programming for four-year-old children?

The program plan describes the district's effort to provide general education preschool to children who may not have access to quality programming.

13. What evidence is provided that the applicant has described current preschool programming in the community including a description of partnering agencies providing preschool, sites where services are provided, and the program plan being used to implement the preschool program?

The applicant's preschool program plan clearly describes how the general education preschool program will be delivered in the community. The plan distinctly describes the role of partnering agencies, the location of services, and the plan to meet the quality program requirements.

14. What evidence is provided that the applicant has addressed prior barriers in implementation of the general education preschool program for four-year-old children?

School districts are encouraged to use their community partners to assist in the examination of data and community characteristics to discover barriers to quality preschool programming. Once barriers are identified, the school district and partners create a plan to alleviate potential obstacles to preschool programming. Potential barriers might include, but are not limited to:

- English Language Learners;
- Transportation issues;
- Quality program standards; and/or
- Insufficient programming options.

15. What evidence is provided that the applicant describes how children will participate in general education preschool programming with minimal disruption?

Because young children need consistency and routine, minimal disruption is a necessary conversation to have among partners. When developing a plan for preschool programming, partners may consider providing services within the environment of the current center-based childcare provider to decrease the number of transitions for the children.

As part of the preschool collaboration process, partners address the needs of children and families who use childcare. School districts may describe the local solutions they have developed to address how to minimize disruption. Those solutions can include transportation, the delivery of services to the childcare location, or other options. For additional information regarding transportation see the Program Requirements in Accordance with 281—IAC chapter 16 section, under Comprehensive Services, of this Technical Assistance Guidance Manual.

Site and Classroom Information Forms

These forms are intended to assist applicants in describing various program models. The Site Information Form is completed for each preschool location, e.g., a childcare center, Head Start, private preschool or school district building. Program models vary based on the location of the preschool program classrooms, the agency providing the services, and the employer of the licensed teacher. The Site Information Forms highlight the collaborative partnerships districts develop to provide the preschool program.

The Classroom Information Form is intended to provide specific details for each classroom. This form verifies the employment of an appropriately licensed teacher as described in the Program Requirements in Accordance with 281—IAC chapter 16 section, under Teacher Requirements, of this Technical Assistance Guidance Manual. In addition, the district identifies the comprehensive foundational curriculum and assessment to be used in the classroom, as well the quality program standards to be implemented. Also included on this form are specific program logistics such as hours of operation, number of days per week, etc. This information verifies the class size for each classroom as described in the Program Requirements in Accordance with 281—IAC chapter 16 section, under Class Size, of this Technical Assistance Guidance Manual.

EXAMPLE ONLY:

The applicant's preschool program plan may include both Options 1 and 2. Option 1 would include preschools located in elementary school buildings with five classrooms of eligible four-year-olds integrated with Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education, Shared Visions, and district preschool. The district would employ the licensed teachers for the five classrooms. Option 2 of the applicant's plan would include preschools located in three community childcare centers with classrooms in a childcare center, nonpublic/faith based school, and a community preschool. The district would not employ the licensed teacher, but contract with the providers to employ and meet preschool program requirements.

Preschool Budget Form

The Preschool Budget Forms are intended to assist districts in providing an accurate estimate of the budget for the approved local program. Part One describes the district's overall preschool budget for supporting programming across their preschool plan. Part Two of the Preschool Budget Form encourages the district to engage in conversations with the partners that will clarify roles, responsibilities, and the amount of funding allocated to each site.

Preschool Budget Form, Part One:

Based on data collected from the *Analysis of Preschool Data Form* and the district analysis of kindergarten enrollment trends, the district estimates the number of eligible children to be served. Each student is weighted 0.60 of the state cost per pupil or a total of \$3,328.00 allotted per pupil. This amount generates the total funding the district will receive in year one.

The district is advised to use the following guidelines when determining budget line items.

Salaries: Instructional salaries requested shall be stated by line item for personnel involved with the program and the percentage of time employed.

Administrative Costs: Administrative costs are those costs which the agency incurs as a result of operating this program. If the budget indicates administrative costs, a budget justification must be included describing the need for additional administrative time. Districts may not supplant administrative costs. Costs must represent an actual additional direct cost to the district in order to justify administrative costs.

Benefits: (Note: IRAs may not be purchased with grant funds.) List employee benefits in this category.

Employee Travel: Includes staff travel. *Amount requested for staff travel and training may not exceed 5percent of the total budget.*

Professional Development: Includes staff development/training as well as staff development offered by a district. *Amount requested for staff travel and training may not exceed 5percent of the total budget.*

Supplies and Materials: Includes consumable items and materials. Construction and remodeling costs and excessive technological expenditures will not be allowed. *Amount requested may not exceed ten percent of the total program budget.*

Equipment: Includes transportable, non-consumable items. *Amount requested may not exceed ten percent of the total program budget.*

Contracted Services: Includes staff workshop and conference registration fee or contracted training providers.

Transportation: Transportation costs are allowed, but not required. Districts are not required to provide transportation for preschoolers from an adjoining district to attend the preschool program. Transportation services provided to nonpublic school children are not eligible for reimbursement.

Preschool Budget Form, Part Two:

The program administrators as well as the fiscal personnel of each of the partnering agencies should assist in developing this section of the budget. It is important to allocate the instructional funds to achieve the goal of school readiness for all and to have a clear understanding of the budget to support that goal. The applicant and partnering agencies may braid additional funding from state and federal sources to support the goal and provide additional hours of service, professional development or other supports. It will be important to identify all these sources of funding. Examples may include Head Start, Empowerment tuition assistance, Shared Visions, childcare, and other funding.

This section of the Preschool Budget Form is completed for each site. This enhances the discussion and understanding of the supports that each agency or funding source will offer to the collaboration. An estimated budget is required in the following categories for each site: Teachers, Materials, and Professional Development. The total amount allocated to each site location must be entered in the column titled *Total Estimated Budget Allocated to Each Partner*.

The estimated budget for each option may not exceed the total budget requested on the Preschool Budget Form, Part One.

Program Requirements in Accordance with 281—IAC Chapter 16

This section provides program requirement information for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children as stipulated in 281—IAC chapter 16). This section is also meant to assist school districts with questions on the Site and Classroom Information Forms. For complete information, school districts should review specific standards and criteria for the program standard selected and 281—IAC chapter 16.

Program Standards

Programs participating in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children must meet one of the approved program standards or assure that program standards will be met within a twelve (12) month period. Approved program standards are indicative of high-quality programming efforts.

The Applicant is responsible for assuring that all programs receiving the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children funds are implementing one of the following quality program standards. This includes programs operated by the school district as well as community programs with whom the district contracts. The Approved Preschool Program Standards are not intended for Child Development Homes.

Approved Preschool Program Standards

National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards and Criteria

NAEYC has been a well-respected, national accreditation organization focused on a structured approach for program improvement since 1985. Accreditation for childcare centers and preschools includes staff and parent input as well as independent validation and ongoing assurance of quality. Accreditation is valid for five years following the independent assessor visit. The costs involved are based on the number of children served at each site. Additional information can be found at the following Website: <http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/>.

Head Start Program Performance Standards

Head Start adheres to a rigorous set of program performance standards which includes a yearly self-assessment as well as an independent evaluation and onsite monitoring visit using the Program Review Instrument for System Monitoring (PRISM) every three years. Child outcomes are reported annually. To obtain information about individual Head Start Programs, contact the directors. A list of directors can be found at the following Website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/performance/index.htm>.

Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS)

The QPPS were developed as a starting point to support a continuum of quality early learning experiences that would align early childhood programs to work toward full compliance with NAEYC program standards and accreditation criteria. They were developed to establish a standard of quality for early care and education programs available in Iowa, whether community-based preschools and childcare programs or those funded through the Department including local school district operated preschools and childcare, Title I preschools, and Early Childhood Special Education programs. All ten of the NAEYC program standards and 45 percent of the criteria were used in drafting state program standards. It should be noted that these standards were not designed for programs serving infants and

toddlers (birth - three) or child development homes. There is no cost for QPPS registration or program verification. Information is available at the following Website:

<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/681/1016/1/2/>.

No Program Standards Currently in Place

If there are no program standards currently in place at the preschool program, the school district has one year in which to attain this requirement and obtain the proper verification for one of the three approved program standards. **Prior to applying, districts and their community partners should study the above program standards to determine their ability to meet them within one year of implementation.** Early Childhood Consultants at the AEA can offer technical assistance to attain program standards. A list of AEA consultants can be found at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/component/option,com_docman/task,doc_download/gid,3620/.

Space Requirements

Outdoor and indoor space appropriate for four-year-old children must be present for the preschool program. Based on the program standard utilized (Head Start Program Performance Standards, QPPS, NAEYC) specific areas and criteria are identified. (See individual program standards for details.) Indoor space is a minimum of 35 square feet per child of usable space in each primary activity area. Outdoor play areas must be protected by fences or natural barriers in order to prevent access to potential dangerous areas. Facilities must meet the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements including access to buildings, toilets, sinks, drinking fountains, outdoor play space, and all classroom and therapy areas. Refer to selected program standards for additional information on space and facility requirements.

Teacher Requirements

Preschool teachers must hold a valid practitioner's license issued by the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) under Iowa Code chapter 272 and hold an endorsement from the BOEE that includes prekindergarten or kindergarten. There is no requirement that the teacher be an employee of the applicant; the teacher may be employed by a private provider or other public agency with whom the district has entered into an agreement or contract under Iowa Code chapter 28E. Contact the Board of Educational Examiners for specific teacher information at the following Website:

<http://www.boee.iowa.gov/>.

Appropriate Teaching Endorsements:

- 100 Teacher – Prekindergarten through grade three, including special education;
- 103 Teacher – Prekindergarten through kindergarten; and
- 106 Teacher – Prekindergarten through grade three.

A teacher with an Early Childhood Teacher – Special Education 15.2 (19) endorsement (also known as #223), may apply to the Board of Educational Examiners for a Class B conditional license in one of the three acceptable teaching endorsement areas.

School districts can post job vacancies and search applicants' resumes on the Teach Iowa Website at:

<http://www.iowaeducationjobs.com/>.

Child Standards

The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children will follow the Iowa Early Learning Standards to identify the knowledge, skills, motivation and attitudes needed by preschoolers that lead to success in school and as adults. The six developmental areas are:

- Physical well-being and motor development;
- Approaches toward learning;
- Social and emotional development;
- Communication, language, and literacy;
- Mathematics and science; and
- Creative arts.

More information regarding the Iowa Early Learning Standards can be found at the following Website: <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/681/805/1/2/>.

Curriculum

The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children requires programs to adopt a research-based or evidence-based curriculum that is developmentally appropriate, including age appropriate, individually appropriate and culturally appropriate. The teacher provides learning environments and experiences that allow children to be actively engaged in their own learning through play. In order to meet the needs of the diverse population of children, families and communities; the curriculum should be culturally sensitive.

A developmentally appropriate curriculum for four-year-old children includes the following areas:

- Social-emotional development;
- Physical development;
- Language development;
- Early literacy;
- Early mathematics;
- Science;
- Technology;
- Creative expression;
- Health and safety; and
- Social studies.

Examples of possible curriculum choices include:

- *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*.
Information can be found at: <http://www.teachingstrategies.com/>.
- *High Scope Curriculum*.
Information can be found at: <http://www.highscope.org/index.asp>.

Child Assessment

Children in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children need to be assessed using a research and evidenced-based assessment. Assessment should be ongoing and systemic, including formal and informal approaches to gain information on child learning and development. The assessments must occur within the context of ongoing communication with families and demonstrate

cultural sensitivity. Assessment results inform decisions regarding child learning, teaching strategies, and program improvement to benefit children.

Components of the assessment system should include:

- Creation of an assessment plan;
- Use of appropriate assessment methods;
- Identification of children's interests and needs;
- Description of children's progress;
- Adaptation of curriculum;
- Communication with families; and
- Involvement of families in the assessment progress.

Ongoing assessments should be administered and analyzed to make decisions about programming, curriculum and instruction, professional development and the use of funds for program improvement.

Some assessment options are available within the research-based curriculum used in the four-year-old preschool. See the following Websites for more in-depth information of possible assessment tools:

- *The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment*.
More information can be found at: http://www.teachingstrategies.com/page/PS_Assessment.cfm.
- *High Scope Curriculum Child Observation Record (COR)*
More information can be found at: <http://www.highscope.org/productDetail.asp?intproductID=18>.

Classroom Start Date and End Date

Programs must begin prior to and no later than October 1. The initial child enrollment count (Preliminary Enrollment Count) generates the district grant funding for the first year of implementation. The subsequent year's funding will be generated through the October Certified Enrollment Count.

Total Number of Hours per Week

Districts must provide at least ten hours per week of intentional instruction directly related to the program's curriculum, excluding any recess time. Districts may choose to provide additional instructional time beyond ten hours per week.

Daily Start Time and End Time

Childcare centers may face unintended financial repercussions based upon the hours of operation for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. Childcare centers may receive subsidy for up to two (2) units of service in a 24 hour period. A unit of service encompasses up to five (5) hours of childcare. If a child is away from the center for five (5) or more hours per day, the center may lose a full unit of service, resulting in a financial hardship for the childcare provider. See *IAC 441 -- 170.1(237A), 170.4(2)*. Districts should consider the hours of operation for the preschool program in order to avoid these repercussions.

Class Size

- Maximum group size is limited to 20 children even if not all children are considered eligible under the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children. Ratio requirements are 1 adult per 10 children.
- Children who are three-years-old or five-years-old on or before September 15, may be included in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, but must NOT be counted in the Certified Enrollment Count for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funding.

Snacks and/or Meals

Meals and snacks are to be served at least two hours apart and not more than three hours apart if serving breakfast and lunch. Nutrition program information can be found at the Website:

<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/59/904/>.

Staff Development

School district teachers must receive professional development in accordance with Iowa Code 284.6. The plan should be included in the school district career development plan and follow the Iowa Professional Development Model. Applicants will offer appropriate staff development opportunities, as available, to community partner teachers of the preschool program who are not employed by the district. District support staff working in four-year-old preschool classrooms should also be provided opportunities for staff development in early childhood education. Administrator knowledge and ongoing professional development in the field of early childhood education are essential to the success of the program. School districts are encouraged to utilize early childhood expertise from the school district or AEA to provide initial and ongoing support for adherence to quality program standards.

At least one staff member who has completed pediatric first-aid training, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for children, must always be present with each group of children. When the program includes swimming and wading and when a child in the group has a special health condition that might require CPR, one staff person who has successfully completed training in CPR is present in the program at all times.

Examples of professional development include, but are not limited to:

- Curriculum (Creative Curriculum/High Scope Curriculum);
- Phonemic awareness and early literacy (Every Child Reads);
- Teaching strategies;
- Assessment of child progress (Creative Curriculum Continuum/High Scope Child Observation Record – COR);
- Social-emotional development;
- Language development;
- Early mathematics;
- Science for preschoolers;
- Technology for preschoolers;
- Creative expression for preschoolers;
- Health and safety;
- Social studies for preschoolers;
- Working with families;

- Community relationships;
- Physical environment;
- Positive Behavior Support; and
- Quality Preschool Program Standards.

Iowa Administrative Code 281— chapter 16, subrule 16.3(8) states, “The school district shall ensure that staff members for the program are provided appropriate staff development in early childhood education.” *Every Child Reads* training is an excellent option for professional development to meet this requirement. The Department encourages consideration be given to this option for the following reasons:

- Every Child Reads (ECR) is a research-based program proven to yield results;
- AEA staff are qualified to deliver ECR training;
- ECR will support the Kindergarten Literacy Assessment that will be used to report the success of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs and to promote ongoing legislative support.

Information regarding professional development offerings appropriate for early childhood staff can be obtained from your AEA, Childcare Resource & Referral office, Community Empowerment Area or through the Department.

Integration of Other Preschool Programs

All children benefit from participating in diverse, rich learning opportunities. Braiding of funds and/or integrating classrooms to include children with disabilities and/or specific socioeconomic groups, who may otherwise be in an exclusive setting, is advantageous for all involved.

Comprehensive Services

The school district or contracted entity may collaborate with community partners to ensure that participating children and families receive these comprehensive services based on need:

- ***Quality developmentally appropriate early learning experiences*** – school districts extend the invitation for voluntary four-year-old preschool to all eligible children/families.
- ***Extended day childcare*** – school districts will work with families, childcare centers, and home providers to avoid disruption in the child’s day as well as attempt to meet the needs of families.
- ***Transportation*** – school districts may work with families, childcare centers, and home providers in order to allow for child access to four-year-old preschool. Districts may provide transportation for children who live in district boundaries, as well as for children who live outside of district boundaries, if the district chooses to. If your district does provide transportation to children in an adjoining district, permission must be granted from the adjoining district. It is recommended that a written agreement be developed between the two districts. If your district does choose to provide transportation the Department provides guidance regarding the safe transportation of children at the link below. Transportation services provided to nonpublic school children are not eligible for reimbursement. School districts must work within the guidelines of Iowa Code 285.10. Districts are encouraged to review the section titled Transportation Guidance found at: <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/60/937/>
- ***Developmental screening, including health, hearing and vision screening*** – Child Find services are available through the local AEA.

- Referral to other agencies for provision of health insurance, health care, immunizations, nutrition services, mental health and oral health services. A list of child health centers and description of services is available at: http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/child_health_centers.asp
- **Family education and support** - For more information on local programs contact: Community Empowerment Areas, Prevent Child Abuse Iowa www.pcaiawa.org, Shared Visions Family Support penny.milburn@iowa.gov, Head Start www.iowaheadstart.org or Iowa Department of Public Health local contact http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/common/pdf/local_public_health_services/region_map.pdf.

Teacher collaboration

The teacher should serve as a conduit through which families can connect with outside resources and agencies as needed. Knowledge of health, mental health, family support, Woman Infant and Children Food Programs (WIC), Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), school meal programs, childcare assistance and scholarships is essential for the teacher to possess in order to refer families to appropriate agencies. In addition to resources and agency knowledge, it may be necessary for the teacher to interact with a variety of service providers that support the child and family. School districts should identify resources that will be in place to support the teacher in collaborative endeavors.

Integration with existing federal, state and local programs

School districts and partners must consider how funding sources will be integrated or coordinated. Possible funding sources include:

- Head Start;
- Community Empowerment;
- Shared Visions;
- Title I; and
- Early Childhood Special Education or ECSE.

Examples of collaborative partnership classrooms exist when:

- An appropriately licensed teacher who is an employee of the school district travels to a childcare center, Head Start, Shared Visions Preschool Program or private preschool to provide education to eligible children for a minimum of ten hours per week.
- The school district contracts with a childcare center, Head Start, Shared Visions Preschool Program or private preschool that employs an appropriately licensed teacher to provide education to eligible children for a minimum of ten hours per week.
- The school district provides preschool services for Head Start and non-Head Start children in the same classroom.

Minimal disruption for children

Because young children need consistency and routine, minimal disruption is a necessary conversation to have among partners. When developing a plan for preschool programming, partners could consider providing services within the environment of the current childcare provider to decrease the number of transitions for the children.

As part of the preschool collaboration process, partners address the needs of children and families who use childcare. School districts may describe the local solutions they have developed to address how to

minimize disruption. Those solutions can include transportation, the delivery of services to the childcare location, or other options.

Community Collaboration

Thanks to our friends in Wisconsin for granting permission to share their preschool program work. Portions of this document were adapted from “Community Approaches to Serving Four-Year-Old Children in Wisconsin” administered through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

The word collaboration comes from the Latin word *collaboratus* and means “to labor together.” The creation of a partnership to establish school district specific, The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children demonstrates communities laboring together for a common goal. When establishing or enhancing community collaboration to develop a plan for providing the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children, school districts and partners reflect on the following elements.

What is collaboration?

- **Community-driven** – Efforts focus on maximizing the services and strengths of the community to offer high-quality, evidence-based preschool for all four-year-olds residing within the school district boundaries.
- **Welcoming to multiple groups** – Planning groups represent the variety of partners reflective in the community itself with a broad range of expertise and perspectives.
- **Respectful** – Collaborative partners understand, listen and respect the needs, goals, and procedures of all participants. The group is flexible enough to construct numerous paths to achieve the goal.
- **Trusting** – Trust and positive relationships develop over time. Once trust is established, partners share their ideas contributing to the common goal.
- **Goal focused** – After an analysis of current programs and existing services, partners ask, “What is it we need to accomplish?” rather than “How have we done it in the past?”
- **Looks different in each community** – The needs of children and families in each community may be different depending on location and population. Partners ask questions and base decisions specific to the needs of the area.

Continuum of Collaboration (adapted from Community Empowerment Tool Kit – Section 3 Developing Community Commitment. For additional community collaboration information refer to: www.empowerment.state.ia.us/common/pdf/kit_docs/section3.pdf)

The following definitions may be useful to applicants in determining the extent of collaboration among community partners.

- **Communication** – There is a process for the exchange of information and common understanding.
- **Contribution** – There are mutual exchanges through which partners help each other by providing some of the resources and support needed to reach their independent goals.
- **Coordination** – There is a deliberate, joint, often formalized relationship among partners involving communication, planning and division of roles and longer term goals.
- **Cooperation** – There is a defined relationship in which partners plan together, negotiate mutual roles and share resources to achieve joint goals.

- Collaboration – Partners engage in a process through which they constructively build an interdependent system which includes a common mission, comprehensive communication and planning, pooled resources and shared risks and products.

Benefits of Community Collaboration

The emphasis in the legislation on collaboration reflects the sincere desire on the part of legislators and their constituents that the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children supports and builds upon what is already working well in Iowa. Many collaborative relationships are already in place in many communities across Iowa.

It also bears repeating that collaboration is itself a research-based practice that is being advocated across government and civic circles precisely because it has been an effective tool for project implementation.

The most obvious benefit are the positive outcomes for families, children and communities as a result of community partner collaboration – the sharing of resources, information. It may be helpful to think about the benefits of collaboration to all of the affected parties:

Benefits of collaborating with community partners around the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children:

- A common vision for children is shared by the community as a whole.
- Relationships, already established in the community, are strengthened and new ones are forged.
- Characteristics, unique to each community, are honored and strengthened.
- Preschool programs are for all eligible children, not just based on ability, family income or ethnic background.
- Fewer daily transitions and disruptions for children occur if there is one location for childcare and preschool.
- School facilities are efficiently utilized.
- A more educated, stable early childhood workforce is created and nurtured.
- Educators and care providers collaborate to provide solid educational opportunities for young children.
- Everyone included (school administrators, business representatives, parents, early care teachers and providers) develop a greater understanding of the importance of high-quality education for young children.

Benefits for children and families:

- Preschool options are available to families.
- Services for families and children are enhanced due to collaboration and communication among teachers, support providers, and families.
- Children with disabilities have opportunity to participate with their peers in a preschool setting.
- Preschool is affordable for all families.
- Quality learning environments through the use of Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, National Association for the Education of Young Children Standards and Criteria or Head Start Program Performance Standards set the stage for high achievement for children.
- Quality efforts are achievable through shared expertise of best practices reflected in program standards.
- Evidence-based curriculum is used with ongoing child assessment.

- Referrals for children with special needs are performed earlier when in a high-quality preschool environment.
- Transition to kindergarten is easier for children who have had a preschool experience.
- Children are better prepared to enter school ready to succeed.
- Relationships between parents and staff are stronger and more communicative.

Challenges of Community Collaboration

School districts are encouraged to develop strategies to effectively address identified challenges.

Challenges of collaborating with partners around four-year-old preschool:

- Childcare centers and Child Development Homes may be threatened by the potential loss of revenue if other options are available.
- Some partners may feel reluctant to “give up control.”
- Hidden agendas and lack of trust may be potential roadblocks for positive collaboration.
- Not all of the partners will be satisfied with the outcome.
- Not all partners may be participating in the conversations.
- Since funding is allocated to the school districts, agreements must be made with potential partners to ensure clarity regarding several issues including, but not limited to, budget, ability of partnering programs to meet quality program standards within one year of program implementation, transportation, hours of service, physical environment, professional development etc.

Challenges for children and families:

- Parents may have safety concerns about their child riding a school bus.
- Parents may need more hours to meet care needs of their child than the offered preschool hours.
- Due to class size minimum and maximum enrollment, children may not be enrolled in the parents’ first choice of program.

Joint Planning for Successful Collaboration

Identify the Stakeholders

The approaches a school district uses to initiate conversations with partners may vary based on the community. Some school districts have a long-standing history of collaboration to provide programming for young children. These districts might choose to build on their already established successful efforts of collaboration. If collaborations are already established, partners can help to identify others who should be involved to enhance the discussion. Some communities might choose to begin fresh or revive previous relationships to specifically focus on four-year-old preschool programs. Some school districts may choose to offer public forums to gain input from the community. There are many ways to begin. The goal is to develop a collaborative partnership to create quality education programs for children.

In the collaborative process, all partners bring unique experiences and knowledge to the table. Positive collaborations begin by acknowledging these resources and building upon them to develop a system that will enhance the success of Iowa's four-year-olds. Identify potential members of influence by thinking about the person in the community who exhibits enthusiasm and positive attitude at meetings, is the most listened to or quoted, or the one that community members most want to please.

The key to making any preschool initiative successful is the support of the many stakeholders in every community who will be affected by such an effort. Garnering that support begins with the careful process of joint planning.

The process involves four distinct steps:

1. Convene community partners;
2. Develop a common vision for preschool for the district that expresses what the partners want to see for four-year-old children;
3. Learn about suitable models and strategies for realizing the vision; and
4. Develop a local preschool services design that best reflects the desires of the partners and the needs of children and families.

Convene Community Partners

Gathering the necessary stakeholders is absolutely critical. In fact, the Application for funding requires this; including documentation that demonstrates this step and that the school district has secured partnership support. This is to ensure that fruitful conversation at a local level takes place. Conversation builds trust among community partners, ensures all needs are expressed, identifies all available resources to support the effort and helps provide creative solutions as to how a new preschool initiative can best fit into the existing system of early care and education at the local level.

The following are some guidelines and recommendations about how to conduct community collaboration meetings:

- **Build on existing partnerships** and expand based on feedback from the existing group.
- **Gauge the support** for the collaborative effort to provide preschool to four-year-olds. What are the common beliefs that will support the group while addressing the issues? Are there hidden agendas that will need to be uncovered and shared? How does a varied group work together to achieve a common vision and purpose?
- **Share data** from the school district, childcare centers, Community Empowerment Boards, Head Start community assessment data, Childcare Resource & Referral, family support and others to develop a clear understanding of the current system including the strengths and needs. The future system for The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children will be built using this information.
- **Publicize the efforts** broadly to increase the awareness of the long-term benefits of early childhood education and the collaborative partnership meetings. Use existing networks including churches, school and childcare newsletters or parents groups. Remember that some of the families might need an interpreter for written and spoken information.
- **Designate a spokesperson** or chair to set agendas, be the media point person, and to disseminate information to partners. The use of a neutral facilitator might be beneficial in some instances.
- **Set realistic timelines** in order to establish relationships that create strong collaborations. Developing relationships takes time. Be patient.
- **Form subcommittees** to address specific issues and report recommendation to the committee. Partners with a specific interest or expertise may develop an analysis of a complex issue, and then expand the knowledge of the collaborative group as a whole. Based on the information from the subcommittee, the committee then makes an informed objective decision.
- **Build trust** by encouraging frank communication and joint decision-making. Establish acceptable practices of communication so everyone feels they are in the “loop.” Develop a common language and culture that respects everyone’s time commitment through timely communication and regular meetings.

Develop a Common Vision

This is an essential first agenda item in partnership meetings because it defines the goal of the collaboration. Refer frequently to the vision in order to maintain partner commitment. The discussions that follow can clarify common values shared among the stakeholders such as “quality is important” or “all children’s needs must be met: physical, emotional, social and cognitive.” Perhaps most importantly of all, it begins conversations on what can be agreed upon, thus, setting the stage for future agreement or at least instilling the hope that differences can be worked out because there were some items of agreement.

Setting a vision also paints a broad and inclusive picture for all stakeholders to see where they fit in the entire scheme. It makes clear that there is plenty of work to be done and that even a new source of funding will not address all the resource needs of the community to support four-year-olds. When this is evident to participants, there is a greater likelihood that they can identify a proper role for themselves which is valued even if that role is different than the one they currently provide.

As discussions continue, maintain focus on the vision of four-year-old preschool. The vision and goal of quality four-year-old preschool is the glue that binds individuals with diverse thoughts and backgrounds to the common purpose.

Learn about Suitable Models or Strategies

Before moving into the planning stage, take some time to learn about suitable models and strategies in order to consider all available options. The more options considered, the more likely the best model for the community will be selected. Learn together about what currently exists in early childhood. What works well for children in the community already? What are the realities that school districts face? Childcare Centers? Families? Child Development Homes? What program standards do preschools use? Use the information to make informed decisions about gaps that currently exist in preschool for four-year-olds.

Learn about other communities in and out of Iowa and what they are doing to establish and maintain a successful four-year-old preschool. Then individualize others' efforts to meet the community's specific needs.

After taking the time to develop a common vision and learn about alternative models and strategies, communities will be able to resist the temptation to rush to a partner's preconceived idea of how it all should fit together. A variety of models and scenarios are included with this document to assist in the imagination of new configurations for delivering preschool services and move beyond conventional wisdom.

Develop a Design for Local Preschool Services

The final design meeting answers the question: How will the unmet comprehensive needs of four-year-olds be met in a manner that the best supports partners' priorities, that best uses existing resources (avoiding supplanting or duplicating services), and that best addresses parents' requirements for full-day care. The design explains the roles of partners that can then be articulated in letters of support. The design supports the intention of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children as well as the intention of other funders such as childcare assistance, Community Empowerment, Shared Visions, or Head Start.

This meeting should be separate from a meeting where final agreement is sought. The final design/development meeting provides a valuable chance to let people agree with a decision without feeling the pressure to reach consensus before they are ready. It also allows the entire meeting to be dedicated to exploring all the things partners like and don't like about the design, as well as recommendations for change, before everyone is expected to accept the proposed design. Efforts to arrive at consensus on the design will pay dividends in goodwill and cooperation during the implementation phase.

Developing Shared Agreements/Contracts

In partnering with community childcare centers to provide community-wide quality preschool programming for four-year-old, it is highly recommended that districts and their partners have a written agreement, or contract, that outlines the expectations of both parties to meet the requirements of. The table below provides a comprehensive list of requirements of the law. It is recommended that each of these requirements be considered as written agreements are created between partnering agencies. Partnering agencies may wish to include additional components in the contract, which are not listed below, such as calendar, lunch, student records, etc.

IAC 16.3(1) A minimum of one teacher (appropriately licensed and certified for early childhood) shall be present with eligible children during the voluntary preschool program instructional time.
IAC 16.3(2) There must be at least one teacher present for every ten children in a classroom during the instructional time described in sub rule 16.3(4). A minimum of one staff member and one teacher shall be present when 11-20 children are present.
IAC 16.3(3) There shall be no more than 20 children per classroom.
IAC 16.3(4) Eligible children shall receive from the teacher at least ten hours per week of intentional instruction directly related to the program's curriculum , such time to be exclusive of recess.
IAC 16.3(5) The preschool program shall demonstrate how the curriculum, assessment, staff development, and instructional strategies are aligned to the Iowa Early Learning Standards. The teacher shall provide instruction on the skills and knowledge included in the Iowa Early Learning Standards.
IAC 16.3(6) The preschool program shall adopt a research-based or evidence-based curriculum.
IAC 16.3(7) The preschool program shall adopt a research-based or evidence-based assessment to provide information on children's learning and development.
IAC 16.3(8) The district shall make available to any teacher of a statewide voluntary preschool program who is not employed by the district staff development that the district offers to the district's personnel to maintain the skills appropriate to the teacher's role . Career development for school district preschool teachers shall be addressed in the school district's career development plan implemented in accordance with Iowa Code section 284.6. The school district shall ensure that staff members for the program are provided appropriate staff development in early childhood education.
IAC 16.3(9) The preschool program shall provide adequate and appropriate space and facilities in accordance with program standards.
IAC 16.3(10) The preschool program shall provide instructional materials and supplies consistent with the program standards and Iowa Early Learning Standards.
IAC 16.3(11) The preschool program shall provide adequate and appropriate meals or snacks in accordance with program standards.

IAC 16.3(12) The preschool program shall involve families through at least one home visit, one family night and at least two family-teacher conferences per year. Family involvement may include volunteering in the classroom, orientation to the preschool program, parent education, general communications, or other activities.
IAC 16.12 Children participating in preschool in an approved local program may be provided transportation services.
IAC 16.13(1) Each approved local program shall provide an annual report to the Department regarding program requirements on forms provided by the Department.
IAC 16.13(2) The approved local program shall collect data on all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. the number of eligible children participating in the preschool programb. the number of eligible children participating in a program that meets the requirements of NAEYC, Head Start or Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards.c. the curriculumd. the assessment as defined in rule 16.2e. the number of teachersf. the Kindergarten Literacy Assessment

Sample Contract

A sample of an actual contract that was developed between a school district and a community childcare center is provided on the following pages. This is a sample only. Districts and their partners need to determine the conditions of their agreement, and those conditions may or may not be the same as what is reflected in the sample contract below. District administration may want to contact their network of colleges who already have similar contracts in place to view other samples.

Contract

This Contract is entered into between the _____ Community School District, PO Box ____, _____, Iowa _____ and Childcare, Inc. located at _____.

Program: The District and Center are entering into this Contract for the purpose of providing space for an educational four-year old program. The Program shall consist of a half-day class providing services to students in a morning session from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and an afternoon session from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. per the agreed upon preschool calendar.

Term: The term of this contract shall be from August 22, 2007, to May 29, 2008. The parties may renew this contract for subsequent school years upon the written agreement of the parties. Either party may terminate the contract with or without cause upon sixty (60) days written notice to the other. Notice shall be deemed to have been given if delivered or mailed to a representative of the party at the address set forth below.

Center Responsibilities

Center agrees to provide a classroom in this Facility which shall have access to appropriate bathroom facilities and to the Facility's playground area.

Center is an approved and licensed child development center by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Center agrees that during the term of this contract and any subsequent renewal it shall maintain such approval and licensing and will abide by all licensing requirements of DHS. If at any time Center shall no longer be DHS approved or licensed, District may terminate this Contract.

Center agrees to provide a teacher associate who shall be available to work with the teacher and children from ____ to _____. The Center's employee assigned to the Program shall be an employee of the Center and shall not be considered an employee of the District for any purpose.

District Responsibilities

The District agrees to provide a full-time certified instructor to teach in the Program. The District shall be responsible for all cost, including salary and benefits, for the certified instructor. Any employee of the District assigned to teach at the facility will remain an employee of the District and shall not be considered an employee of the Center for any purpose. District shall be entitled to supervise and observe any assigned teacher during the hours of operation of the Program.

The District shall also provide an approved curriculum for such class and shall provide any necessary supporting materials for the curriculum. The District's employee assigned to the Program shall be responsible for ensuring that the approved curriculum is taught and for overseeing the implementation of the curriculum.

The District shall be responsible for determining special education and related services categorization and placement in accordance with state and federal law and shall be responsible for any special costs or programming involved for students enrolling with an individual education plan (IEP).

District shall not be responsible for providing transportation for any students enrolled in the program. Transportation for field trips planned by the teacher will be provided by the District.

Students: Students shall be required to complete District enrollment process in order to be enrolled in the Program and shall be subject to all of District policies, practices, and procedures. District shall be responsible for monitoring attendance requirements.

Calendar: The Program shall conduct classes according to District's school calendar for each day that classes are in session for other students enrolled in District schools.

Student Records: District and Center shall cooperate regarding student records for students enrolled in the Program, and District shall maintain all educational records as required by law. Each party and its employees shall be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any educational records as required by law. The parties shall furnish each other with any educational records as required by law. The parties shall furnish each other with any necessary documentation needed to comply with each party's federal and state standards, regulations, and requirements, including, but not limited to, free and reduced lunch Applications, enrollment reports, and attendance reports.

Lunch: The District will reimburse the Center for lunches that are provided at the current school rate (\$1.75) per student meal served. The Center will bill the district on a monthly basis for student meals served.

Financial Arrangements:

The Center agrees not to charge tuition or fees for the District instructional portion of the day for any four-year-old who is receiving day care services. A parent of each child in the program will sign a form, provided by the District, to reflect that no tuition or fees are charged for the instructional portion of the day.

Billing: The Center will bill the District on a monthly basis. The cut-off falls ten days prior to the third Wednesday of the month. The District will make payments on the third Thursday of each month.

Administrative Fee: The District agrees to pay the Center a yearly Administrative Fee of \$20 for each four-year-old student served at the Center.

Four-Year-Olds Receiving Day Care / Enrolled in Voluntary Preschool: The District will pay the Center an amount of \$xx per month, per student, for the District instructional portion of the day.

\$xx x n students x n month x = \$ xxxx (to be amended if enrollment increases)

Four-Year-Olds Enrolled in Voluntary Preschool / Not receiving Childcare: The District will pay the Center an amount of \$xxx per month or \$xxx for the nine months the space is provided for four-year-old students enrolled in the voluntary preschool but not receiving day care services.

Center Provided Associate: The District agrees to reimburse the Center for their actual cost of the associate for the time that they spend working with the four-year-old preschool. Proof of actual cost will need to be provided to the District.

The Center should turn in request for payment at the end of each month with payment from the district to be made on third Thursday of each month.

Summary of Monthly Center Payments from the District: The District will pay the Center on the third Thursday of each month one ninth of the following amounts as noted in this contract:

	Yearly Amount	Monthly Payment
Tuition payback	\$	\$
Space	\$	\$
Administrative Fee	\$	\$
Associate reimbursement (estimated, actual cost to be determined)	\$	\$
	\$	\$

Representatives: The contact person for each party shall be as follows:

District:

Center:

Amendment of Contract: This contract may not be modified, changed, or varied except by a written instrument signed by the parties. This Contract shall not be assigned by either party unless the other party agrees to the assignment in writing.

Childcare Center name

_____ Date_____

Anytown School District

_____ Date_____